10: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

141 Young people of both sexes are attractive and robust
● [146] but hard work, undernourishment and, in the case of the women, constant child-bearing often make them appear old when they have only reached what should be the prime of life.

591 428 596 Family life among the Karens is not unlike that of the ordinary European family. They do not have the patriarchial family system of the Chinese, and each married couple usually has its own house in which to live. Often the woman brings her young husband to live with her parents and he inherits their lands on their decease.

582 163 165 Marriage in the early days was strictly within the tribe. Even marriage with those of other Karen tribes was looked down upon. Karen women usually bear as many as ten or more children, but often raise less than half of them,

858 888 due to their lack of knowledge of sanitation. Karen fathers are usually fond of their children and take as good care of them as they know how. Their love is generally sentimental and children are allowed to rule the household. Old people usually receive good care for the Karens always reverence age.

IV

OCCUPATIONS

243 433 In the early days the Karens were concerned with wresting a living for themselves from the ground where they lived. Almost without exception they were cultivators of the soil and raised rice, their principal food. They followed the two methods usually found in Burma, the mountain method in the hills and the paddy-field method on the plains.

243 In the hills the wasteful way of cultivating rice was that of clearing a section, called in Burmese a *taung-ya*,

19: Marshall M-6 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

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men is rare. I can recall only one man who had a hairy chest. There is nothing unusual about the eyebrows.

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The Karen seem to be susceptible to all the diseases prevalent in the country. Children are seen more often than not with distended bowels, due to worms. Enlarged spleen is the rule in the hills, where malaria is so prevalent. A number of cases in which a low vitality has caused ulcers to break out and involve the entire system have come under my notice. Epidemics of measles are much feared, due to complications induced by bathing soon after the rash has disappeared, the bathing being thought necessary. Smallpox does not cause much apprehension. The bubonic plague has never claimed many Karen victims, but the influenza was terribly fatal during the cool season of 1918-19. Tuberculosis is one of the many diseases from the West that is claiming its victims among the Karen people. Though their open-air life safeguards them somewhat, their fear of demons causes them to cover their heads at night, and they breathe only through their blankets. Those who live in the better built houses on the plains also deprive themselves of fresh air by retiring into the close inner room of their homes in order to avoid the smell of cooking, which they fear. Such superstitious practices furnish ideal breeding-places for germs. The unbalanced diet of the Karen also restricts their disease-resisting powers. One hopes that, with improved ideas on sanitation and hygiene, the people of this race will not only be relieved from the present high rate of infant mortality, but also that those surviving may attain greater longevity.

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The presence of certain birth-marks on the children of Mongolian parents has been thought by some scientists to be an important criterion for distinguishing members of that race.[1] The Karen infants certainly have these blue patches on the back and buttocks. Sometimes they are so indistinct as to be hardly noticeable, and again they are clear and bright. They are irregular in shape and size. My observations confirm the accuracy of the census returns, namely, that about seven out of ten children have these marks at birth. They usually disappear by the time a child is a year old. The Karen explanation for them is that they are the stains of leaves, on which the spirits of the children sat or laid down to rest in the course of their long and wearisome journey from their former abode. These marks are thought to show that the children having

[1] *The Indian Imperial Census*, 1911, Burma, Pt. I, 221-222.

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

CHAPTER IX

FOOD AND ITS PREPARATION

262 The dietary of the Karen includes almost everything edible in the way of vegetables that grow in their country. A great variety of fish, birds, and animals are also partaken of; but it should be said at once that three-fourths, if not seven-eighths, of the amount of food they consume is rice, of which they raise many varieties. Next to rice they resort in time of need to millet, maize, and roots, especially yams of different kinds. Besides gourds, squashes, egg-plant, roselle, sweet potatoes, and the edible fruits, the Karen eat the tender shoots of many plants and trees, including the bamboo.

All kinds of fish and eels, some varieties of crabs, snakes, locusts, and grasshoppers, snails and other mollusks, and even certain varieties of ants are comprised in the menu. Flesh of all sorts from that of the elephant to that of the rat is eaten with relish.[1] In the realm of feathered creatures the variety is equally comprehensive, ranging from the sparrow to the peacock, not even omitting the crow. Fish-paste, called in Karen "nya u" [2] but commonly given its Burmese name of "ngape," is greatly prized by the Karen, who think that it adds a very savory flavor to their food. On the plains they buy it from the Burmans from whom, it may be, they have adopted its use, but sometimes those living near streams or lakes make it for themselves.

● 146 263 Notwithstanding their inclusive diet, the Karen have no idea of what we call a balanced ration and, after all, are more or less undernourished. They also practice constantly the habit of betel chewing, which benumbs their sense of taste. For these reasons they crave highly seasoned foods. Chilies or red peppers are considered a necessity, while meats and powdered condiments of spices, tumeric, and chilies are used only to make the pungent curry sauce with which the cooked rice is flavored. Salt, which is obtained at the bazaars, is also used in seasoning.

[1] Messrs. Hose and MacDougal speak of some writer, whose name they do not give, as conveying the impression that the Karen do not eat the flesh of animals belonging to the cat tribe. I have not found this to be true. (*Vide* Hose and McDougal, *Pagan Tribes of Borneo*, Vol. II, 239).

[2] This word means literally "rotten fish."